

REMARKS:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 14-21 were rejected. Claims 14-21 have been amended. New claims 22-24 have been added. Thus, claims 14-21 are pending and under consideration. No new matter has been added. The rejections are traversed below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112¶2:

At page 2 of the outstanding Office Action, claims 14 and 18-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112¶2. Claims 14-21 are amended herein.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a):

Claims 14-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,084,685 (Mori) and U.S. Patent No. 5,377,016 (Kashiwagi).

Mori executes operations in parallel through time-sharing using a single multifunction peripheral device. In Mori, a multifunction peripheral device has different units performing different operations, such as a facsimile unit, a printer unit, etc., (see, col. 3, line 66 through col. 5, line 10). Then, the different units receive image data and execute respective operations using the received image data (see, col. 5, lines 16-54). That is, Mori is limited to individually using corresponding units of a multifunction peripheral device to perform operations such as faxing, printing, scanning, etc.

The Examiner acknowledges that Mori is silent regarding canceling of an assignment when an assigned multifunction machine has not responded within a predetermined amount of time, but relies on Kashiwagi as teaching the same. However, Kashiwagi is directed to a multifunction image processing system that processes image data provided by an image reading unit and an external equipment in a parallel mode. In Kashiwagi, a multiplexer switches between the image data of a scanner and the image data of the external equipment, such as a PC, facsimile machine, etc., (see, col. 2, lines 52-56). Thus, Kashiwagi is limited to switching between processing data of a scanner and data of an external equipment, where a wait function is implemented until elimination of a factor that has suspended a processing job (see, col. 6, lines 34-45).

In contrast, the present invention executes multiple functions, such as faxing, printing, scanning, etc., using multiple multifunction apparatuses interconnected via a network. The present invention assigns requests from any one of the multifunction apparatuses to a request

processor to execute the multiple functions and cancels the requests when a predetermined amount of time lapses. This enables collective or aggregate processing of a multiple function request such that any one of the available multifunction apparatuses processes the request.

As recited in independent claims 14 and 21, the present invention includes processing "requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines", assigning "the request processing unit to the at least one multifunction machine based on the request" and sending "a completion-of-assignment notification indicating that processing of the request is possible", where the assignment of the request processing unit is cancelled "when the request is not received within a predetermined amount of time".

Further, independent claims 14 and 21 also recite that the present invention includes an information recorder having "multifunction connection information indicative of whether or not the multifunction machine is in an operable state in linkage with the server", where "the request is received based on the multifunction connection information".

It is submitted that the independent claims 14 and 21 are patentable over the combination of Mori and Kashiwagi.

For at least the above-mentioned reasons, claims depending from independent claims 1 and 5-11 are patentably distinguishable over the combination of Mori and Kashiwagi. The dependent claims are also independently patentable. For example, as recited in claim 15, "the completion-of-assignment notification has information of a function, and the function is processable by the server". The combination of Mori and Kashiwagi method does not teach or suggest providing "completion-of-assignment notification [having] information of a function, and the function is processable by the server", as recited in claim 15.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIMS:

New claim 22 recites a method of executing multiple functions using multifunction apparatuses connected to each other via a network, including "assigning a processing request to a usable multifunction apparatus among the multifunction apparatuses based on operation content of the request and transmitting a notification indicative of the assignment to the usable multifunction apparatus" and "executing a function via the usable multifunction apparatus in accordance with the assigned request".

New claim 24 recites, "server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a

network", where the server includes "a plurality of request processing units that process a request received from at least one of the multifunction machines" based on assignment to the multifunction machine based on the request.

It is respectfully submitted that features of new claims 23 and 24 are patentably distinguishable over the cited references.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

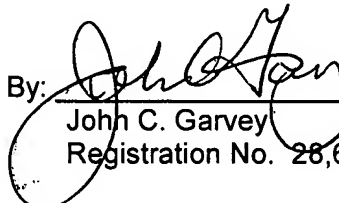
Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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